



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Karalee Harper, director
Division of Chronic Disease
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4517
E-mail: kaharper@nd.gov

Week Three of Indoor Air Quality Month Focuses on the Effects of Secondhand Smoke

BISMARCK, N.D. – Week three of *Indoor Air Quality Month* (October) is Secondhand Smoke Awareness Week and is a great time to remind families about the negative impact that secondhand smoke can have on their loved one's health, according to Karalee Harper, director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Chronic Disease.

Secondhand smoke (also known as environmental tobacco smoke) includes the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette or cigar and the smoke exhaled by smokers. It contains more than 4,000 chemicals, many of which can cause cancer.

"There is *no* risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke," said Harper. "Children are especially vulnerable. When children are exposed to secondhand smoke, they are at an increased risk of respiratory diseases, ear infections and severe asthma. When infants are in an environment with secondhand smoke, there is an increased possibility that they could die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)."

Harper offers tips that families can follow to protect their loved ones from secondhand smoke.

- Make sure your home and car are smoke-free. Going to a different room to smoke, or using a fan, will not protect your family from secondhand smoke.
- Ask people not to smoke around you or your children. This includes grandparents and babysitters.
- If you smoke outside, afterward remove outerwear and wash your hands before interacting with family members.
- Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke if you are pregnant.
- Talk to your children about the dangers of tobacco and teach them to stay away from secondhand smoke.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

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“Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be harmful to your health,” said Harper. “The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued an advisory warning to all people with a heart condition or those predisposed to heart disease to avoid all indoor environments where smoking is allowed. According to the CDC, secondhand smoke causes an estimated 46,000 premature deaths from heart disease each year in the United States among nonsmokers.

According to Harper, if you smoke, the single most important thing you can do for your loved ones is to get help with quitting. Making the commitment to quit will provide your family with a healthier environment and a healthier future.

North Dakotans can receive free, confidential help with quitting tobacco through NDQuits, which offers telephone, computer and mobile services. Go to www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits for more information about NDQuits. You can also call 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669) to speak with an NDQuits counselor. Both services offer professional cessation counseling and free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges for those who qualify.

For more information about secondhand smoke, contact Karalee Harper, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4517 or 800.280.5512. For more information about *Indoor Air Quality Month*, contact Justin Otto, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188.

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